

Figs, dogwoods, crape myrtles

By Bruce Williams, Ph.D.
Area Specialized Agent, Turfgrass
Cooperative Extension Service

the Plant Doctor

Bruce Williams, Ph.D.

Dear Plant Doctor:

The past three years I have contacted you by phone in reference to my fig tree. The fruit is hard and no good to eat. Each time you send me information on fig culture. I still have a problem, as you can see by the figs enclosed. I transferred my fig trees from Fayetteville to Brunswick County four years ago. Prior to moving these trees they produced good fruit. What can I do to help these trees produce good fruit?

The reason I continue to send you letters on fig culture is I believe you have a soil problem that is influencing your fruit quality. It is more likely a root-pruning parasite, a nutrient toxicity or a nutrient deficiency is causing your fruit to be so hard. No fungal disease is evident on the fruit.

Figs do best in a soil that has a pH between 6.0 and 7.0. Figs can tolerate more alkaline soils easier than acid soils. I often see extremely acid soils in your neck of the woods. If the soil pH is too acid, then some plant nutrients may be unavailable while others may be toxic to your fig plant. Take a soil sample and submit for analysis (at your cooperative extension service office) to determine the pH and inherent fertility of your soil.

Severe nematode infestations can also influence your fruit quality. Nematodes love to feed on fig roots. High populations of plant parasitic nematodes can seriously harm the ability of your plant to extract water and nutrients from the soil. Use a compost rich in shrimp shells, fish scales, poultry feathers or other high chitin-containing material to reduce nematode populations.

Figs are heavy feeders. For best results, apply one pound of an 8-8-8 fertilizer for each year of age until a

maximum of 12 pounds of fertilizer per plan is reached; then maintain this rate each year. If the age of your tree is unknown, apply one pound of fertilizer per year for each foot of height. Apply the fertilizer as follows: heavy soils (clays or silts) -- when buds swell; sandy soils -- half when buds swell and the other half in late May.

Place fertilizer over mulch in a circle starting from the ends of the branches and working toward the trunk in a one-foot band. If the fig plant produces more than one to two feet of new stem growth per year, reduce or eliminate nitrogen fertilization. Excessive nitrogen results in light fruiting, fruit splitting and souring.

Dear Plant Doctor:

The leaves on my dogwood are turning brown from the tip inward (sample enclosed). I just planted these trees earlier this year and do not want to lose them. What is the problem?

You have a classic case of leaf

scorch. Recently planted trees do not have an extensive root system. The roots are all concentrated in the pot or a root ball.

During hot, dry weather (like the spring we just had) the newly planted tree does not have a root system sufficient to forage for all the water needed for plant growth. The plant will lose water through the leaves faster than the root system can supply water. You must water the plant until an adequate root system can be developed.

Recently planted dogwoods and Japanese maples are especially susceptible to leaf scorch during hot, dry weather.

Dear Plant Doctor:

I have beautiful crape myrtles this year but the leaves are getting a disease and I am afraid the plant will die. Some leaves get a gray-white mold on them while other leaves get large brown spots and then fall off. Is there a spray I can use to get rid of this disease?

Your problem is due to powdery

mildew (*Erysiphe lagerstroemiae*). Crape myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*) are prone to powdery mildew problems but the disease is easily controlled with applications of the fungicides Banner (propiconazole) or Bayleton (triadimefon). Follow all label directions.

Many new crape myrtle cultivars have varying levels of genetic resistance to powdery mildew so be sure to plant new varieties with resistance to the disease to reduce future pesticide applications.

Send your gardening questions or comments to *The Plant Doctor*, P. O. Box 109, Bolivia, NC 28422.

Pets of week

A female Dachshund mix dog that is said to be "very sweet" is now available for adoption at the Brunswick County Animal Control Center. She is about one year old and is said to be extremely affectionate. The adoption fee is \$26.50 and the fee for a rabies vaccination is \$7.

A female gray and white kitten named "Muffin" is also up for adoption. She is about four weeks old and is said to be very playful and friendly. The adoption fee is \$5 and the fee for a rabies vaccination is \$7.

For more information, persons can contact the animal control center at 754-8204 or call toll-free 1-800-233-2169.

The chamber report

By Karen S. Hope
Executive Vice-President

(This is a report on the activities of the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce that appears weekly in *The State Port Pilot*.)

Each of these businesses held drawings in honor of the occasion.

Dianne Vereen, co-owner of Philomena Moultrie's, announced the winners in her drawings. Aimee Johnson of Lowell won a pink ice ring; Jim Hinkson, Long Beach, won a Rusty Wallace hat; Kim Brain, Long Beach, won a wok gift basket; Martha Lennon, Long Beach, won a purple ice ring; Carl Moss, Long Beach, won a bag of praline mix; Judy Hair won a Peter Rabbit gift basket; Val Schmidt won a baby carriage gourmet food gift basket; and the grand prize winner of a sterling silver pendant was Deanne Weaver of Long Beach.

Chris Howard, president of Innovative Ideas, Advertising and Design, announced the winners in his drawings. Dewey Propst, Port Realty, won a \$50 savings bond at United Carolina Bank; Janice Finchum, Dorothy Essey and Associates, won a \$50 gift certificate to Innovative Ideas, Advertising and Design; and Norman Holden, Southport, won a \$10 gift certificate to the newly re-opened New York Deli.

Prizes can be picked up by contacting Dianne or Chris.

Anyone looking to purchase one of the few remaining T-shirts from the N. C. Fourth of July Festival can stop by the chamber office on Long Beach Road Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Satur-

day, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sizes still available include children's large and medium and adult large and XXL. The cost per shirt is \$10 children, \$14 adult.

We would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to a very special friend of the chamber. Boatswain's Mate Senior Chief J. D. Arndt will be moving to another station soon after today's change-of-command ceremony.

He has been an active member of the community. Chief Arndt was kind enough to let the chamber use his photography of the Oak Island Lighthouse for a coffee mug that the chamber sells to fund the Christmas-by-the-Sea Festival.

We wish chief Arndt calm seas, smooth sailing and a speedy return.

We would like to welcome U. S. Coast Guard Station Oak Island's new Boatswain's Mate Senior Chief Bradley S. Steigleder to the Southport-Oak Island area and offer him our continued support.

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